Publications Exchange

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THE IMPORTANCE of the governmental and institutional publications, which form the bulk of current exchange materials, has been recognized by governments as well as by research institutions. The fact that the system of barter known as exchange can secure important foreign publications for use in this country, circumvent the soft currency problem, make our publications available to technically-backward countries, and place our publications in countries whose citizens know too little about us, is recognized and appreciated.

There have been a number of significant developments and trends in exchanges since the beginning of World War II. They are as follows: the increased concern of governments for the extension and improvement of international exchanges; Unesco leadership in the same field; the establishment of national book centers, such as the United States Book Exchange; the use of procurement officers; and finally, the small beginnings of multilateral exchanges.

One of the most striking trends in the exchange of current publications during the past decade has been the increased interest which governments have shown in it. World War II made painfully apparent to our government the shortage in this country of vital information about other countries. Efforts to avoid World War III have pointed up the importance of the wide distribution of publications from this country which might make for better understanding with other nations. Both of these needs are met by the single operation of exchanges.

The United States government has supported exchanges for more than a century. The service of the Smithsonian Institution in shipping and in receiving publications for libraries in this country, now known as the International Exchange Service, has been in operation since 1849. In addition, the Institution executes the federal government's exchange agreements with other nations. The feeling that this long-

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time program was inadequate was evidenced by the federal government's Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation when it authorized in 1948 "a comprehensive report on the legislation, policies, procedure, and program of the United States Government for carrying on exchanges of publications. . ." [1] The resulting excellent and comprehensive report by Kipp confirmed the importance of exchange as an instrument in a cultural relations program.

Additional evidence of governmental concern is given by the two-year contract announced last June by the United States Book Exchange and the Foreign Operations Administration under which fifty-three foreign countries will acquire scientific, technical, and educational literature from the Exchange. The Exchange will send publications to libraries and institutions in F.O.A. countries without handling charges in exchange for their publications. The program is intended to build up back-issue stocks of books and periodicals in F.O.A. countries, and its two-year, $100,000 budget is apportioned to various parts of the world on the basis of need. The enlargement in the foreign holdings of the Exchange will be an incidental advantage to libraries in this country.

Another development, this time in the international field, is the decision of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation to sponsor an exchange of scientific and technical documents among its members. This decision extends to the whole of Western Europe the system of pooling and distributing scientific and technical information which proved valuable during World War II. The plan went into operation on January 1, 1950, with each of the member nations agreeing to supply free of charge six copies of its pertinent official documents to each of the other fourteen members.

Much credit for the increased activity in exchanges among nations must go to the leadership of Unesco. The Unesco Clearing House for Publications is the only international publications exchange service. It promotes inter-governmental exchange agreements, encourages the establishment of national book centers, and seeks to reduce or eliminate import duties and transportation costs on publications exchanged. Unesco has published a manual on the international exchange of publications, of which a second edition is in progress, and publishes monthly the *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries,* which gives current information on exchange possibilities.

National book centers have been discussed frequently in library literature during the past twenty years. Some centers have been active

since the Brussels' Convention of 1886; others have sprung up since World War II through the encouragement of Unesco. The range of their activities varies greatly, as do their sponsoring agencies and means of support. Some, such as the Japanese and British centers, function primarily as information agencies. Others, such as the Hungarian and East German centers, serve as transmission agencies. A third group, represented by the French and Australian centers, perform both of the above functions and in addition negotiate exchange agreements.

The exchange of duplicate materials presents quite a different problem from the exchange of current publications. In this country the significant development in the exchange of duplicates has been the formation of the United States Book Exchange. The formation of such a center was suggested as early as 1876 by Melvil Dewey. It was his idea that such a center would be the least expensive way of exchanging duplicates, and that an activity that could not be profitably carried on in the least expensive way should not be carried on at all. Since 1876 there has been all through library literature a thread of articles suggesting the formation of such a center. Now there is a center, and its progress and usefulness must be of concern to all who are interested in the exchange of duplicates.

Historically the United States Book Exchange was preceded by the Duplicate Exchange Union and by the short-lived Wilson cooperative clearinghouse. In 1937 the H. W. Wilson Company offered to serve as a clearinghouse to facilitate the completion of fragmentary serial sets among libraries. The service operated at a loss and was withdrawn after a few months trial. The Duplicate Exchange Union met with more success, perhaps because it was initiated by librarians, who felt an obligation to support it. Largely through the efforts of Neil Van Deusen, the Union was formed in 1940 as a periodicals duplicate exchange. In 1944 its scope was broadened to include non-serial duplicates, and changes were made in its method of operation. The Union is still active, but it is interesting to note that the Detroit Public Library withdrew in 1949 because it felt that the United States Book Exchange would be more efficient. The reasons given were that the Exchange had a larger membership, consequently a larger stock to draw from, and that participation did not require listing of materials offered.

The United States Book Exchange succeeded the American Book Center for War-Devastated Libraries. The fact that it grew out of a benevolent organization may have colored some librarians' thinking

about it during the first years of its existence. The Exchange was formed in 1948 as a service organization to handle duplicates in one central place. Its sponsors included the leading national library associations as well as many national scholarly, educational, and research organizations. Its financial support came from a $90,000 grant made by the Rockefeller Foundation, supplemented by fees paid by participating libraries for materials obtained and by contracts with the State Department for services performed for foreign libraries. By the end of 1953 the Exchange could report 3,000,000 duplicates on hand. It offers such special services as the supplying of L.C. catalog cards with books selected from the Exchange lists, the acceptance of orders for periodicals as well as the listing of duplicates on hand, the willingness to accept all periodicals which member libraries may wish to send, the holding of a semi-annual open house at which librarians may select from stock, and the investigation of the non-receipt of items due member libraries on regular exchanges in cases where claims have not been answered by the exchange partner.

The question of the cost of using the services of the United States Book Exchange is a basic one. The Exchange reported in 1951 that during its first year and a half it had placed 100,000 foreign and domestic serial items in participating American libraries at a cost to the participating institutions of about $20,000. This is an average cost of 20 cents per item. In the October, 1951, issue of *Serial Slants* a librarian reported that for her library U.S.B.E. items had cost 34 cents each and that items received on regular exchange cost only 4 cents each.[2] Cost-per-item is not, of course, the whole story. As the U.S.B.E. collection becomes larger, it becomes potentially more useful. The elimination of the need for listing duplicates certainly saves time for libraries. However this advantage can be cancelled by the cost of transportation involved in sending duplicates to the Exchange, particularly if the library is some distance from Washington.

Inevitably the Exchange must compare its services with those of the periodical dealer. A library having a list of periodical wants may well decide to send it to a dealer, who will accept it at no charge, rather than to the Exchange, which charges 10 cents per title for considering wants. This disadvantage, of course, can be avoided by those libraries which are close to the Washington area and can economically send librarians to the Exchange's open house with their want lists in hand. A series of regional exchange centers would extend this advantage to all member libraries.

It seems unlikely that the United States Book Exchange will ever

replace the exchanges carried on by associations of special libraries limited to one field of interest. The oldest of these is the Medical Library Association Exchange, started in 1898. Other exchanges are operated by the American Association of Law Libraries and the American Theological Library Association. These specialized exchanges serve the same purpose in relation to periodical dealers that cooperatives do in the commercial field. In the general field the greater number of periodical dealers helps keep practices and prices reasonable.

A post-war development of potential importance to acquisitions is the use of trained procurement officers to secure hard-to-get materials. The Division of Acquisition and Distribution of the State Department has developed a successful procurement program for obtaining European publications for the Library of Congress. John Fall, writing in the April 1954 issue of the *Library Quarterly,* says, "If libraries could in some way make a working arrangement with the State Department procurement officers or with other federal agencies abroad, the acquisition of books and documents would be materially increased." [3]

A more specialized project is that of nine federal agencies working together through the Inter-Agency Foreign Map Procurement Coordination Committee on a map procurement program. This project, which attempts systematic coverage of the world, has been served by six full-time geographical attachés and four temporary attachés. According to the 1953–1954 report of the Library of Congress Map Division,[4] the Division has received under the project an average of 15,500 maps per year from approximately 125 official mapping agencies located in 58 countries or dependencies. Since maps are more often official publications than not, such a program is particularly important and productive. The program also has implications for the procurement of other types of material. It is a systematic, cooperative program and shows the value of the personal contact which the procurement officer is able to set up and maintain. Certainly research libraries in this country know the value of procurement agents through the work of the Documents Expediter. Further exploration of the use of this procurement method would seem to be indicated.

The multilateral exchange of current publications as a means of converting publications in one subject field into those of another has been suggested but not thoroughly explored. The Unesco Clearing House for Publications gives multilateral exchange promotion as one of its aims. Under this program it attempts to set up an arrangement whereby one institution gives to a second institution which gives in

turn to a third which in turn gives to the first institution. The possibility of such three-way exchanges was considered by the Midwest Inter-Library Center about two years ago. A number of member libraries agreed to supply publications which could be used to obtain other publications for the center. According to Ralph Esterquest,[5] director of MILC, the method has been used in only one instance so far because no other need for it has arisen. However the center still considers the method a possible one and will use it if need arises.

Serious problems remain to be solved if exchanges are to approach their full potential effectiveness. Lacks in bibliography, the economics of exchange, and inadequate coverage must be studied. The increased writing of recent years on the subject of exchanges,[6] the points of dissatisfaction with current exchange practices, and the increased concern of government about exchange all suggest that action should be taken to systematize and rationalize exchange practices. The time is ripe for a modern-day Alexandre Vattemare to vitalize the world's exchange resources, but today it will take more than a single ventriloquist to accomplish all that should be done.

A serious handicap in the setting up of foreign exchanges is the lack of adequate bibliographies. One of the proposals which came out of the Conference on International Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges held at Princeton University in 1946 was that Unesco prepare a world list of periodicals which would indicate which titles were available on an exchange basis. Since this problem of bibliography is not peculiar to those engaged in exchange work, a more realistic approach to it would be the encouragement of the publication of national bibliographies which would include periodicals and exchange materials as well as the more obvious publications.

Studies of exchange costs and coverage are overdue. Figures on the cost of exchanges are so varied for different libraries that one must suspect that hidden costs are not always recognized. One library, such as Columbia University, may assess its exchange costs and conclude that it is getting nearly six times as much in returns as the expenses which it puts into its exchange program [7] while another library may find that it is sending out more value in publications than it is receiving. Acquisition librarians need to know as a guide to everyday operations whether it costs more to request a title through exchange than it does to place an order for it. One obvious way to reduce the cost of exchanges would be to give some study to the techniques involved. Uniformity of listing, the use of the least expensive shipping methods, greater selectivity of material for listing, and the use of

restricted subject lists are all obvious, but often ignored, economies.

The existence of the Farmington Plan as a means of placing at least one copy of each priced non-serial, foreign publication of research value in this country points up the lack of systematic coverage in the exchange field. From a research point of view items received through exchange are just as important as trade items. The need for over-all planning for acquisition through exchange is recognized, but so far no action has been taken. Out of the writing that has been done on this problem during the past decade a two-point program emerges on which there is some agreement and which might be the basis for a practical plan.

Part One of the program would extend the federal government's treaty exchanges to permit the acquisition of one or more additional sets of foreign government publications to be deposited in research libraries in this country. This would require legislative action, as the 1936 act which regulates the treaty exchanges does not allow for additional copies. Librarians would not question the value of such an addition to the government's program. It would not seem too difficult to convince government officials also of the value of such action since such receipts add to the research resources of this country and serve its welfare.

Part Two of the program would arrange the systematic receipt of copies of all non-governmental, non-priced foreign publications of research value. The suggestion has been made that U.S.B.E. serve as an agency for the procurement of such publications, distribution to be based on the Farmington Plan. Efforts to secure a grant to set up the plan have not been successful so far.

If the federal government and U.S.B.E. would consent to carry out the two parts of this plan, the materials thus secured could very well be distributed on the basis of the Farmington Plan assignments. This would assure at least a second copy of foreign documents available in this country and at least one copy of non-governmental publications.

A more ambitious program, and one which should at least be considered, is that dependent upon the existence of a system of regional libraries in this country. This plan would involve getting all of the publications in multiple copies for deposit in the regional libraries. In general the securing of a first copy of the materials which we are discussing requires cost and effort while the securing of additional copies requires little more cost and effort.

The idea that a country of this size would have more adequate li-

brary service with a system of regional libraries is not a new one. Just as county library systems bring better library service to individuals, so national regional libraries would bring better library service to libraries. It has been suggested that the Midwest Inter-Library Center might well be the first of such a series. K. D. Metcalf [8] in 1951 stated, "I think that, ultimately, there should be, in addition to the Midwest Inter-Library Center, a number of other regional libraries, one in the Northeast, one near Washington in which the federal libraries should join, one somewhere in the South, and one in the far West." The deposit function of the Midwest Inter-Library Center is the one most emphasized at present. Perhaps the member libraries of the Center should consider a change of emphasis.

A system of regional libraries has obvious advantages. Additional sets of worth-while publications are added insurance that these publications will be available when needed. Additional sets also make the publications more readily available to students of the sciences, including the critical social sciences. Regional libraries might serve as branches of the United States Book Exchange, thus eliminating the distance problem felt by libraries west of the Alleghenies. As an alternate plan to that of the U.S.B.E. securing non-governmental foreign exchanges (Part Two of the above program), the regional libraries could secure such materials through the use of the publications of the research libraries in their regions to exchange for the publications of foreign institutions. Close cooperation between the regional libraries in setting up exchanges and in relaying information to each other could have widespread benefits.

The cost of setting up such a system and of securing additional sets of publications for it may seem large, but it is infinitesimal compared with the arms program. The potential good which full availability of foreign publications could do in this country cannot be overlooked. The fact that additional publications would have to be sent from this country to secure additional copies is a further advantage. The State Department has recognized the importance of a free flow of information from this country to other countries, permitting the presentation of our points of view and making available to other areas of the world needed technical information.

In 1947 R. B. Downs [9] wrote in *Science*, "The free interchange of cultural, scientific, and educational information is unquestionably one of the most critical needs of the world today. Society's progress depends upon the extent to which scholars and scientists have unrestricted access to all sources of information. Likewise, international

understanding requires that the cultural records of every nation be fully available to all other nations. Finally, intelligent and informed world opinion must be based upon the wide dissemination of educational materials. These are our stakes in efforts to perfect the machinery for international exchanges." These are our stakes in all exchanges.

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